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Two Hundredth Anniversary of the Founding of the First Botanic Garden in the American Colonies by John Bartram, June 5-6, 1931

CATALOGUE OF EXHIBITS

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of Philadelphia
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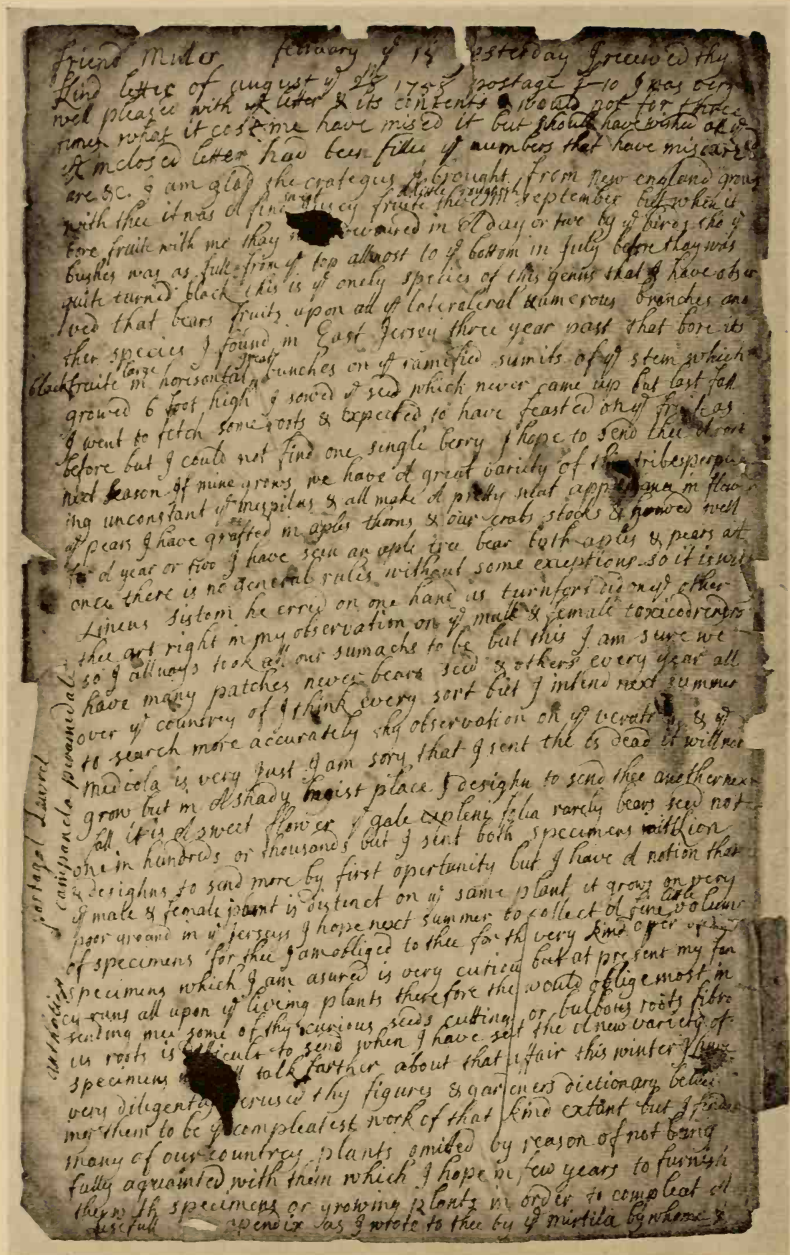

Draft of a letter from John Bartram to Philip Miller, 1759

FOREWORD

JOHN BARTRAM was born in 1699 and died in 1777. He was descended from a Derbyshire family which came to this country in 1682, the year of the establishment of Penn's colony. William Bartram, his son, wrote many years later of his father's education: "Being born in a newly-settled colony, of not more than fifty years establishment, in a country where the sciences of the old continent were little known, it cannot be supposed that he could derive great advantages or assistance from school-learning or literature. He had a very early inclination to the study of physic and surgery. He even acquired so much knowledge in the practice of the latter science as to be very useful: and, in many instances, he gave great relief to his poor neighbors, who were unable to apply for medicines and assistance to the physicians of the city (Philadelphia). It is extremely probable that, as most of his medicines were derived from the vegetable kingdom, this circumstance might point out to him the necessity of and excite a desire for the study of botany." While still a young man he settled down to farming as a means of support. He was twice married, to Mary Maris in 1723, and in 1729, two years after her death, to Ann Mendenhall. Mary had two children; Ann was the mother of nine.

Meanwhile his love of plants and their study growing stronger Bartram announced his intention of abandoning farming to turn botanist. In this he was greatly encouraged by James Logan, who in 1729 wrote to England for a copy of *Parkinson's Herbal* which he wished to give Bartram saying that "he had a genius perfectly well turned for botany."

Ann, however, proved decidedly unsympathetic to her husband's love for botany. She prudently pointed out that farming paid but that botany, while presumably delightful, helped neither to feed nor clothe the family.

Had John Bartram been a different type of man his family would, in all probability, have suffered, but he was an admirable executive who had won the love of his servants, by his unusually fair treatment, so that he was able to leave the management of his farm to them. As years went on he did succeed in making his pursuit of botany a paying concern. Nevertheless, Ann must have had some anxious times, and doubtless found a fair share of the farm problems added to her other labors.

John Bartram had not only a love for botany, but being a shrewd and careful observer, a man of strong physique, of courage, and of untiring energy, he was able to satisfy his desires and at the same time furnish an eager and wealthy group of men with plants which they were intensely desirous to possess. At this date botany and medicine were one science. New plants might mean new drugs. John Bartram was born at a time when his desire to learn botany could be made into a profitable business.

At first Bartram botanized on a small scale, studying the growing things on his farm and then going on short journeys. His real career began when, at an unknown date but some years prior to 1735, mutual acquaintances made him known to Peter Collinson, a London woolen draper, much interested in the introduction and establishment of new plants and who for a number of years had been searching for a satisfactory American collector. Peter Collinson and John Bartram never met but from about 1735 to 1768 they carried on an extensive and delightful correspondence.

At first Collinson gave Bartram personal orders, later he obtained other patrons—Lord Petre, the Dukes of Norfolk, Richmond and Bedford, and Philip Miller, Superintendent of the Physic Garden at Chelsea and author of the famous *Gardeners Dictionary*. Bartram sent over boxes of seeds, roots and plants, the price being fixed at 5 guineas a box. Not only plants, but turtles, snakes, birds'-nests, frogs, fossils, beetles and all manner of treasures were sent. The letters are full of accounts of safe arrivals or of disasters—once rats nested in the boxes, ships were delayed, plants died, or proved too weak to grow.

Bartram got minute instructions and not always botanical ones, for Peter Collinson was well aware that he was a man of the great world, and that Bartram lived in the wilderness. Between botanical details appears the paragraph: "One thing I must desire of thee and do insist that thou oblige me therein: that thou make up thy drugget clothes, to go to Virginia in and not appear to disgrace thyself or me; for though I should not esteem thee the less, to come to me in what dress thou will—yet these Virginians are a very gentle, well dressed people—and look perhaps more at a man's outside than his inside. For these reasons, pray go very clean, neat and handsomely dressed to Virginia. Never mind thy clothes; I will send more another year."

Bartram's trips took him West and South, generally on horseback, and often in danger, of which Collinson was aware when he

wrote: "I hope my old friend will not expose himself to Indian cruelties and yet I want a dozen boxes of seeds."

Ultimately, after repeated efforts on the part of Collinson, Bartram was appointed Botanist to the King and, soon after, when he was almost 70 years of age, was commissioned to go to Florida to explore the sources of the St. John's River.

Gradually Bartram's fame grew, Collinson made him known to all the eminent botanists of his time, and Bartram was in correspondence with Dr. Dillenius of Oxford, Dr. Gronovius of Leyden, Queen Ulrica of Sweden, Linnaeus, Lord Bute, Mark Catesby, Dr. Fothergill, Sir Hans Sloane and others. A society in Edinburgh sent him a gold medal. Sir Hans Sloane was but one of the authors who sent him a copy of his book, and through the years Bartram continued to farm, collect, pack, ship, study, and, at intervals to conduct the affairs of his farm and family, and yet found time to write two books. His death, when the United States was in its first year, possibly was hastened by the fear that the King's soldiers, disregarding his position as King's Botanist, might hurt or destroy his garden.

EXHIBITS

I. Portrait of John Bartram.

By Charles Wilson Peale. Bartram was called by Linnaeus "The greatest natural Botanist in the world."

II. Bible.

John Bartram's family Bible, evidently much used.

III. Fork.

Carried in the saddle-bags on many trips after new plants.

IV. Bell.

This is the bell which John Bartram used to put around his saddle horse's neck when he let him graze while the Botanist was looking around for rare shrubbery and plants. It is the bell he used on his horse when he made his several trips through North and South Carolina, Georgia and Florida collecting specimens. The bell has been handed down to the oldest son of each generation to the present time.

V. Teacup and Spoon.

Part of a tea-set which was a present to Ann Bartram from Deborah, wife of Benjamin Franklin.

VI. Vaccination Box.

Carried and used by John Bartram, who frequently acted as doctor to his family and neighbors.

VII. "Observations on the Inhabitants, Soil, Climate, etc."—London, 1751.

First Edition of a book by John Bartram, which was printed in London without his knowledge. The trip, here described, was undertaken to promote better relations with Indians. Bartram sent his Journal abroad and was not further consulted.

VIII. "Description of East Florida, etc."—London, 1769.

First Edition of the book John Bartram wrote after his Expedition undertaken on the King's orders.

IX. Manuscript Journal of John Bartram, 1765.

This Journal partly records the trip to South Carolina and St. Augustine, Florida.

X. James Logan, 1674–1751.

Secretary of the Province of Pennsylvania, Clerk of the Council and for two years Acting Governor of the Colony. At his home, Stenton, he devoted his scant leisure to plants. He was both patron and friend to Bartram.

XI. Picture of Peter Collinson.

Friend, correspondent and London agent for John Bartram.
"He was indefatigable in his exertions to procure the seeds of curious

and useful vegetables and equally free in distributing them. Natural History in all its parts, planting and horticulture were his delight."—Pulteney's Progress of Botany, 1790.

XII. Books which belonged to Peter Collinson.

Peter Collinson, member of the Society of Friends, woolen draper and ardent botanist, added to his other labors those of agent for the Library Company of Philadelphia and for a small library in Darby. In his will he bequeathed a collection of books, two of which are shown here, to a library of Friends in Philadelphia. Both books are on religious subjects and show Collinson's autograph on the title page.

XIII. Draft of Letter to "friend Peter."

As was the prudent custom of the day, Bartram made and kept copies of all his correspondence. Most of his actual letters are now in the British Museum.

XIV. Letter from Collinson to "friend John."

XV. The Herbal of John Parkinson, 1567–1650.

The sub-title reads: "A garden of all sorts of pleasant flowers, which our English ayre will permitt to be noursed up: with A Kitchen garden of all manner of Herbes rootes and fruits for meate or sauce used with us and An orchard of all sorts of fruit bearing Trees and Shrubbes fit for our Land: together with the right ordering, planting and preserving of them and their uses and virtues."

Parkinson was apothecary to James I and from Charles I received the title of Botanicus Regius Primarius.

It was a copy of this book that James Logan gave to Bartram in 1729.

XVI. "The Gardener's Dictionary" of Philip Miller.

Philip Miller was gardener of the Physick Garden at Chelsea, which Sir Hans Sloane gave to the Apothecaries company on "condition of its being kept up to the Improvement of Botany."

This Dictionary, which went into many editions, was the first to describe a large number of plants introduced into England by Bartram.

In 1737 Collinson writes to Bartram: "Now thee has got Parkinson and Miller. I would not have thee trouble thyself with others; for they contain the ancient and modern knowledge of Botany."

The second volume here shown was a gift from Peter Collinson to the Library Company of Philadelphia. He writes:

Gracious Street, London,

July 22, 1732.

"Gentlemen,

I am a stranger to most of you, but not to your laudable design to erect a Public Library. I beg your acceptance of my mite—Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophy and Philip Miller's Gardening Dictionary. It will be an instance of your candour to accept the intention and goodwill of the giver and not regard the meanness of the gift. I wish you success and am with much respect,

Yours,
Peter Collinson."

XVII. Copy of a Letter from Bartram to Philip Miller.

XVIII. Benjamin Franklin.

In many ways he befriended Bartram. In the old house there still remains the casting on which stood a Franklin stove, presented by its originator.

XIX. Carolus Linnaeus.

Linnaeus was born in 1707. He was known to eminent botanists in Sweden, Holland and England. His "Genera Plantarum" printed in 1737 was the starting point of modern systematic botany. He was in frequent communication with Bartram as he and his pupils identified many of the plants which Bartram introduced to England.

XX. Sir Hans Sloane, 1660–1763.

He took his degree as doctor, studied and wrote of plants, was physician to Queen Anne and was created Baronet by George I. He was president of the College of Physicians and of the Royal Society of London. His own herbarium was enlarged by the purchase of the herbaria of other botanists. The whole, in addition to his manuscripts and library was left with certain conditions to the nation. The government in accepting the bequest formed the nucleus of British Museum. He was one of Bartram's correspondents and sent him various botanical books as presents.

XXI. Cup.

Presented to John Bartram by Sir Hans Sloane in 1742 as a token of appreciation of Bartram's services to the gardens of England.

XXII. Draft of letter from John Bartram to Sir Hans Sloane.

XXIII. George III.

In 1765, Bartram was appointed Royal Botanist at the munificent sum of £50 a year. This king was not an enthusiastic patron of botany and Bartram had oftentimes to be content with the glory of his title as in 1767 Collinson writes: "The plants and seeds for the king were carefully delivered and no doubt but were acceptable. The honour of giving is sufficient, but there is no notice taken of the freight and other charges."

XXIV. Dr. John Fothergill, 1712–1780.

An eminent English physician who introduced and cultivated many new plants. Friend of Collinson and Bartram whose English affairs he helped after Collinson's death.

XXV. Two plants named after Bartram.

It is surprising that a man who made so many discoveries should not have had some well-known plant named after him. The *Quercus Heterophylla*, or Bartram Oak is not a common tree and the only other scientific use of his name is the *Bartramia* of Hedwig, a moss.

XXVI. Magnifying Glass.

This glass, which was the property of the Botanist, helped to identify many intricate specimens. Failing eyesight began to trouble him at forty-five and later letters often refer to his need of strong glasses, and his inability to recognize plants at anything but the closest range.

XXVII. Gold Medal.

Sent to "Mr. John Bartram by a Society of Gentlemen at Edinburgh, 1772." This Society was formed in 1764 for the purpose of importing useful seeds and plants.

XXVIII. Will of John Bartram.

XXIX. Reproductions of William Bartram's Drawings.

William Bartram, always "Billy" in his father's letters, had a decided talent for drawing and painting. Where he obtained his instruction is not known but his technique is so good that he is not supposed to have been self-taught. From the time he was a young man he accompanied his father on botanical trips, sharing with him the fevers, dangers and excitements of discovery and often illustrating the animal or plant which went to an English patron. At one time he was anxious to devote his life to drawing. The Duchess of Portland and Dr. Fothergill, who knew William's drawings and paintings through the kind offices of Collinson, placed more than one order with him.

XXX. Copies of Paintings by William Bartram.

William Bartram was called "Puc-Puggy" or Flower Hunter by the Seminoles. In his own right he was an eminent botanist. It was under the patronage of Dr. Fothergill that he spent almost five years in the Floridas, Carolinas and Georgia, an account of which is to be read in his Travels. Possibly his most famous discovery is *Franklinia altamaha*, often referred to as *Gordonia*. In one place in Georgia he saw a number of these plants growing. One specimen which he brought home lived and from this has descended every one of these plants now growing as, although much search has been made, it has never since been found growing wild. It is believed by many eminent authorities that fire or clearing has permanently destroyed the only location in which it grew.

XXXI. Copy of William Bartram's "Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, and E. and W. Florida."

This book was printed in Philadelphia in 1791, in London in 1792 and in Dublin in 1793. It was translated into German. Not only with those interested in the subject matter, but with many casual readers it was an exceedingly popular book, often referred to in magazines and articles of the time. Samuel T. Coleridge in his Table Talk, under date of March 1827 writes: "The Latest Book of Travels I know written in the spirit of the old travellers is Bartram's Account of the Tour in the Floridas. It is a Book of High Merit Every Way."

Wordsworth evidently knew it well as is shown by the parallel passages from "Ruth" and the "Travels". Many pages are copied into Coleridge's notebook; see the photographed page here shown, also the parallel passages from "Kubla Khan" and the "Travels".

XXXII. Part of the Manuscript of William Bartram's "Travels through the Carolinas, Georgia, and E. and W. Florida, 1773–1777."

XXXIII. William Bartram's Journal—Written in Florida.

'The Travels" are in many places almost copied from this journal.

XXXIV. Nine photographs of Herbarium Specimens and accompanying memoranda. Sent by John Bartram to Peter Collinson and now in the British Museum. Photograph of William Bartram's herbarium specimen of the *Franklinia altamaha*.

To

Dr John Fothergill in Harper
Street near red Lion square
London.

August ye 12th 1769.

My dear worthy friend
I received thy kind friendly letter of ye 5th month 1769 & was surprised to find so much kindness expressed in it to one who so little deserved it—I have not received any answer from Michel Collinson or Benjamin franklin or any others to those letters I sent to them with the Captain that brought thine but with Michel there is prety large accounts to settle between us which I desired his father A little time before his disease to send me an account how thay stood which he had not done of two or thre year before. I am glad ye Box of plants was acceptable & came prety well under ye greatest disadvantage being packed in frosen clods, lay shiped at the warf frose frose up A month after thay might have sailed & at last wind bound at our Capes. I never was so disapointed as last fall all our vesails yt sailed in ye fall for London went so good one I expected to sail after changed her voyage one was to sail to Bristol but she proved Leaky & could not get out till spring: I am much obliged for thy valuable present of Purvers translation I called at Fishers for them the bound ones was all disposed off thay offered to get bound & charge thee with it but I would Concent being sattisfied that ye unbound present was more then I deserved I like it much he hath molified many harsh Ca(l)vinistical expresions in thair ould translation. I am much obliged to thee for thy kind offer of service I dont know yet whether ye King continues his bounty nor who receives it.
My Coloasia now makes A glorious Appearance I intend to try if I cant assist ye King & my friend Fothergill in being Proprietors of it. it rarely grows by seed I must try to send ye roots in A Cask of mud but it must have A pond of water it will grow from two foot to 12 deep in water where thay will soon spread with thair rushy creeping roots 2 or 3 rod square & ye leaves wholy cover ye water.
it is very kind in the to ingage thy Nephew to take Care of ye seeds I send I must enlarge my nurcery garden I like thy proposal of sowing or transplanting our native plants into it but I cant

resolve upon any thing till I hear from Colinson Franklin Gordon or Webb: doth thee want A natural history of all our turtles water as well as land; we have A great variety of ye first & but two real kinds of ye last

thy proposal of makeing natural mould by an artifitial means may answer very well in many cases but then we should be perticular in ye choice of earth & leaves to suite perticular vegitables if we want A rich melow soil we may chuse that amongst hard dark gray iron stones limeston & marble & ye leaves must be wallnut Mulbery Sumach Papaw hasel & locust; if we want A lean stif mould we must chuse white clay & gravel with chesnut & white oak leaves; if A hungry light mould chuse sand mixed with isinglas with chesnut beech & Hicory leaves; but all our kind of Oak leaves is long in disolving—I take one of ye Causes of natural fertility to be Saline efluviums out of ye earth & perhaps ye atmospher may contribute something to it as well as several other Causes. for ye wisdom of Providence is manifested in his incomprehensible works in nature for ye general support of ye universe by such A wise structur that many causes mutualy contribute to one effect each of which under ye direction of Almighty Power promotes ye general balance of ye universe

the sterility of different soils hath numerous causes beside wet & dry, cold & heat. as A deep compact bed of clay near ye surface or A flat rock of great extent of isinglas. or as in Carolina Georgia & Florida A vast strata of whiteis clay near ye surface is A vast body of concreeted sea shels some by A Calcarious matter some by A ferruginous & in some places sand & hard Compacted so with A ferruginous matter as to be impenitrable by water unless by a long continued pressure which is ye cause of ye great extensive Savanas in Carolina Georgia & florida where in moist seasons water continually lyeth on ye surface untill ye sun in A long dry season exhales ye greatest part & ye other descends by slow degrees through ye compact strata below & furnisheth ye great fountains that breaks out allmost level with ye sea in floriday & banks of rivers in Carolina. It is very clearly demonstrable that our low lands to florida from ye North river hath been raised since ye sea retired from between our mountains A little of our side York its near twenty milis from ye hills to ye sea; Against Philadelphia its 50 Against Maryland 60 against virginia 100. No Carolina 150 south carolina 200 some places more or less Georgia much like florida 3 & 400 from ye hills to ye point all this extent of countrey hath been raised by ye wash

of ye sea & high winds blowing ye sands A great hight on shore above 40 foot high as I have observed in one stage & from thence still higher as ye back ground is leveled to receive it. allso ye great rivers brings down much soil in great flood. it is clearly evident that all our great chains of mountains was once covered with sea or salt water for A long time before ye earth was habitable to beasts; as many of them & most of ye vails between them is covered with seashels embodied in vast masses of rocks most of which is limestone; these great vails doubtless was great bays of ye sea long after ye high hills was dry; indeed upon A very close examination our back mountainous country seems much resembling our sea coasts except in ye elevation ye position rocks, ye materials of which thay are composed as sandstone, pebles, gravel & sea shells ye same as on our Coast except in magnitude nay even ye very sea & salt marsh mud in its exact position but now is converted into sulphurious vitriolick & aluminous rocks but I take ye Cordelior mountains & high piked vulcanos to be raised to thair vast hight by fire; but I dont deny ye noachian flood but I believe by ye account we have of it being mixed with so much fresh water those shells was neither bred in it nor was it natural for such prodigious numbers to be then formed in such masses of rocks all over ye back Countrey

I am very much obliged to thee for thy kind offer of service to me its strange that Michael Collinson hath not wrote to me but one letter & that mentioned not A word how ye affairs stands between us which is considerable as his father had not settled with me for years I like thy advice much to write to ye Kings gardner at Kew in my next to thee I intend to inclose one to him in ye mean time I remain thy gratefull & much obliged friend

John Bartram.

To

Doctor John Fothergill
in Harpers street

London

June ye 10th 1770.

Dear worthy Kind friend

I have now before me thy kind letter of ye 13th of ye 1 month 1770 & the 19th of ye 3d month am glad thee received ye Colocasia & frogs shall be glad to hear of thair success—it is kind yea very kind my dear friend to ingage thy self so much for my interest as to recomend thy nephew to take care of my affairs in ye room of our disceased friend & also to assist him therein. am very willing to allow him full Commisions for his trouble I had severall ways to oblige dear Peter but at Present I know of none to gratifie thy Nephew in ye same way. I take his offer very kindly & have given orders to all my Corespondents to pay what is owing to me to him & that his recept shall be their suffitient discharge from me: ye six guineas from John Lewin is for my son John who sent him insects formerly; I can assure thee my dear friend that I recon my self in thy debt for books & much other kindness; as for my son Williams drawings he modestly declines setting A price upon them but leaves it to thy generosity & ye Dutches of Portland for whome he desighned ye draught of ye Colocasia & shels ye rest for thy self.

as for ye ferns of which we have variety I intend to send them next fall if A convenient opertunity offers. as to my sight I never was near sighted. about 45 years ould I began to use spectcles which helped my sight by which I could discover objects as clear as usual when without them I could not see to read A good print but about 60 thay failed. but then I could see prety well without them but then I must have ye object within 4 or 6 inches near my eyes. for at 2 or 3 foot distance objects seem magnified but surrounded with A mist & multiplied. ye moon appears as five before ye first quarter & ye planets or ye blaze of A Candle 4 or 5 times as big as formerly yet I can read & write by Candle light when ye Candle & letters is very near & when I weed my garden my knees & elbow must Kiss ye ground it seems rather to go worse every year; but I am resighned to ye disposal of Allmighty Power his will be done. I am obliged to thee for our friend Ellisis Performance its A prety Pamphet. he makes some mention of destructive insects but it would fill

A pretty large volum to give A full & acurate description of all our American insects it would be attended with long & laborious search & observation as many of them makes thair most destructiv havock in ye night & secreets themselves in ye day. some feeds on ye roots of several plants some on stalks others on leaves some on flowers others on fruites & many on grains & seeds but I think thair greatest mischief & detriment to us is in ye way of generation in prepairing A proper nidus in which thay lay their Eggs & ye prodigious ravage ye embrio makes in ye vegitable while it is growing to such perfection as to disengage it self so as to rove at large in ye open Air.

I have not received any letter from ye Kings gardener at Kew in answer to ye letter I wrote to him desireing to be informed what plants would be most acceptable would any or All our turtles sent Alive be acceptable to thee I could send most of them in A Box with Moss or leaves

I have tryed all spectacles that came in my way or that I could come at but cant find one that helps my sight I here there is one pair in town lately come over. thay are exceeding clear & one sees an object at A great distance clearly I called at ye gentlemans house who brought them over to see them but he was not at home he holds them at an excesive price as I am informed

I remain with A grateful respect for exceeding favours received thy sincear friend

JOHN BARTRAM turn over

P.S.

I have received A kind letter from Michel Collinson dated March ye first aquai n(t)ing me that he intended to take ye tour to franck & Italy & be out 6 or 7 months; in his first letter he wrote that Sr William Bretton came to him to pay ye anual Bounty from ye King that he desired him to take it back & keep it till I gave further orders I wrote to Michal that I had not fixed upon any person yet but that I should give perticular orders this year & Michall wrote in his last letter that he had acquainted Sr William with it so that now James hath undertaken to succeed our dear Peter I should be obliged to you to let him know how ye case stands thine as before

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THE Bartram Association and the Academy of Natural Sciences have been enabled to make this exhibit through the kindness and generosity of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Library Company of Philadelphia, the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, the Rosenbach Company, Mrs. Horatio Gates Lloyd, Mr. Frank M. Bartram, Miss Margaret H. Bartram, Mrs. John W. Bartram, Mrs. Oscar F. West, Mr. and Maris E. Bartram, Mrs. Margaret Bartram Lugar; and further beg to record their indebtedness to Dr. Ramsbottom and Mr. A. W. Exell, Keeper and Under-Keeper of Botany at the British Museum, through whose kindness we are here able to show photographs of Bartram's herbarium specimens, copies of William Bartram's drawings and paintings, and to print two of seven unpublished letters of John Bartram to Dr. Fothergill.